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THE PRESIDENT--A KEY TO INNOVATION.

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QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FROM 233 CHIEF ADMINISTRATORS OF PUBLIC JUNIOR COLLEGES WERE ANALYZED TO (1) MEASURE THE EXTENT OF EXPERIMENTATION IN SPECIFIC STAFF UTILIZATION PRACTICES, (2) ANALYZE REASONS FOR NONADOPTION OF THESE PRACTICES, AND (3) DETERMINE THE EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ON SUCH EXPERIMENTATION. THE FIVE PRACTICES WERE TEAM TEACHING, VARIATIONS IN CLASS SIZE, USE OF TEACHER AIDES, USE OF LANGUAGE LABORATORIES, AND INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION. IN ALL EXCEPT TELEVISION, NONADOPTION SHOWED A HIGHER CORRELATION WITH THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR'S ATTITUDE THAN WITH ELEVEN SITUATIONAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS. NONADOPTION OF TELEVISION APPEARED TO RESULT FROM LACK OF FUNDS MORE OFTEN THAN FROM LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT. IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT, WHILE SOME SITUATIONAL FACTORS OCCASIONALLY MIGHT SERVE AS PREDICTORS, THE PERSONAL ATTITUDE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR AFFECTING THE ADOPTION OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN THE "JUNIOR COLLEGE JOURNAL," VOLUME 37, NUMBER 2, OCTOBER 1966. (WO)

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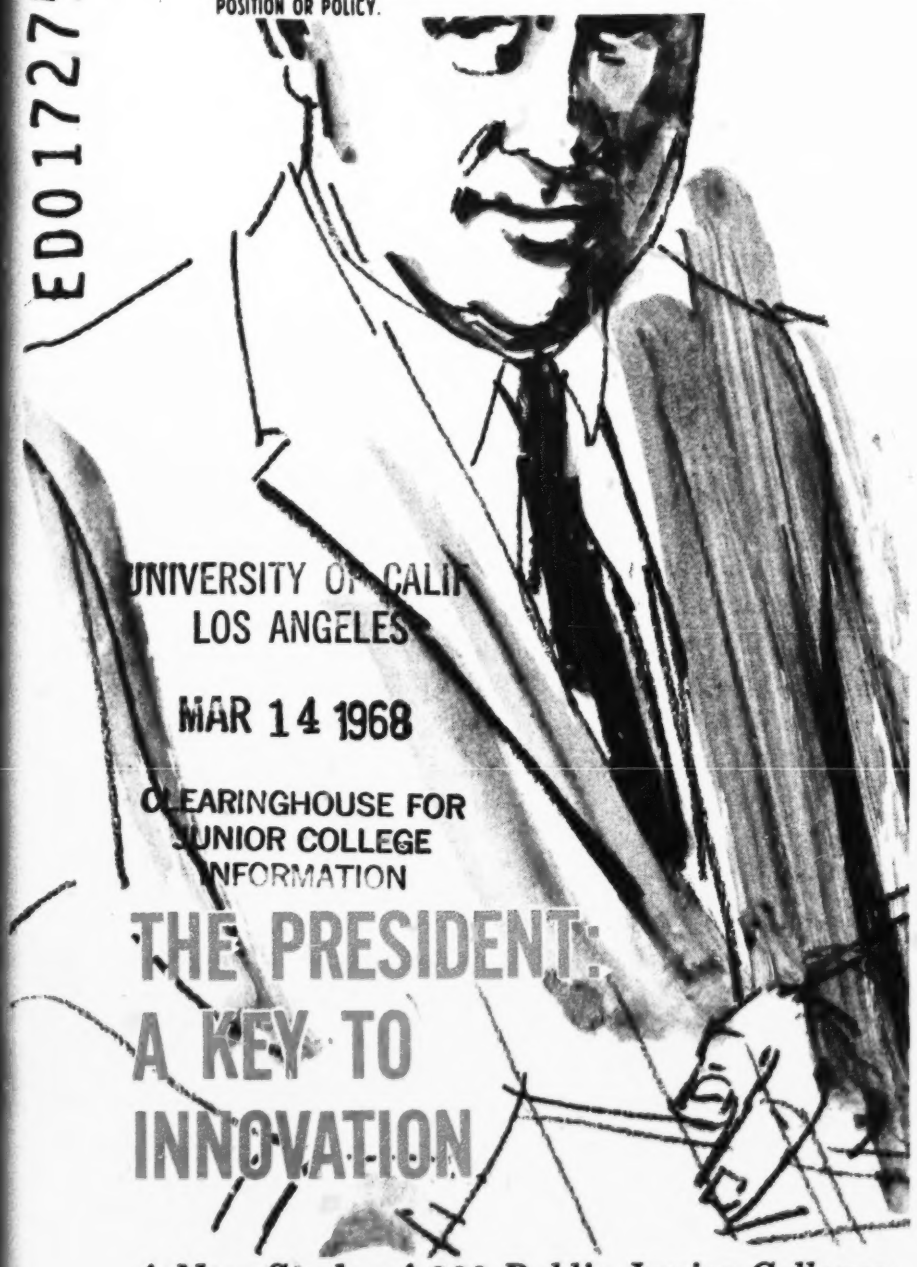

A New Study of 233 Public Junior Colleges Indicates the Importance of the Chief Administrator's Personal Attitude

By William K. Ramstad

Who innovates? A study [1] recently completed by the author indicates that the personal attitude of the chief administrative officer toward experimental programs was the most significant single factor in the process of adoption or nonadoption of such programs.

For the purposes of the study information was gathered from the chief administrative officers of 233 public junior colleges in the United States. The purposes of the questionnaire were (1) to measure the extent of the experimentation relating to specific staff utilization practices underway in junior colleges, (2) to analyze the reasons for the nonadoption of specific experimental programs, and (3) to determine the effect of various environmental conditions on such experimentation.

Method

The instrument consisted of three parts. Part A asked for a report of the status of each of five experimental programs. The chief administrative officer selected the best answer, one that most nearly described the status of the particular technique, from the following:

1. Have adopted
2. Planning to adopt
3. May adopt
4. Probably will not adopt
5. Definitely will not adopt

Part B of the instrument required that the respondent indicate the importance, on a seven-point scale, of each of the following fifteen factors as they affected his attitude toward adoption.

The following were predicted to represent the administrator's personal evaluation of the technique.

1. Just a fad
2. Other things with higher priority
3. I don't like it
4. Insufficient substantiating research
5. Not educationally sound
6. Contrary to philosophy
7. Not suitable for our type of program
8. Question merits of technique
9. Creates staff jealousies

The following items were predicted to represent situational factors.

1. Lack of funds
2. Lack of proper space
3. Lack of community support
4. Lack of staff support
5. Lack of governing board support
6. Lack of trained staff

The following descriptive statistics were obtained from each of the participating colleges.

1. Enrollment—full-time day school equivalent
2. Location—large city, suburb, small town or rural area
3. Availability of staff
4. Type of curriculum—per cent of students in transfer and terminal programs
5. Per student cost—annual per student cost, exclusive of transportation costs and capital outlay

The questionnaire dealt with five types of staff utilization programs.

1. *Team teaching:* An arrangement whereby two or more teachers cooperatively plan for, instruct, and evaluate one or more class groups.
2. *Class size variations:* Some classes of ninety or more students are regularly scheduled. These classes are regularly divided into sections of fifteen or less for small group discussion work. In addition, learning facilities

(laboratories, shops, art rooms, etc.) are made available to students doing independent work.

3. *Teacher aides:* Paid or volunteer assistants are available to work in the college or at home in order to assume some of the duties conventionally handled by teachers. (Clerks, student aides, lay readers, laboratory assistants, etc.)

4. *Language laboratories:* An electronically equipped laboratory is used to provide recordings of native speakers to assist in teaching of foreign languages.

5. *Television:* Closed circuit, a commercial channel, or an educational channel is used as a regular part of the instructional program.

Results

The study was undertaken to determine if there were descriptive statistics—enrollment, location, availability of staff, type of curriculum, and per student cost—that would prove to be associated with the adoption of experimental programs.

A second part of the study hypothesized that the personal attitude of the chief administrative officer toward experimental programs in public junior colleges was the most significant single factor in the process of adoption or nonadoption of such practices.

The reasons, or attitudes, were factored by means of the varimax method of factor analysis. Correlations were computed and factor loadings determined.

The twenty variables—nine attitudinal, six situational, and five environmental—were further processed by a multiple regression program in order to determine the best predictor of nonadoption.

Enrollment: Although for five experimental programs the colleges with enrollments of more than 900 full-time students showed a higher percentage of adoption, other colleges were giving careful consideration to experimental programs in the study.

Location: For four of the five programs, a higher percentage of adoption was indicated in colleges located in large cities. In the case of teacher aides, suburban colleges showed a higher rate of adoption.

Availability of staff: In four programs a higher percentage of adoption was evidenced in colleges not affected by the teacher shortage. The fifth program, teacher aides, showed almost equal adoption by schools having sufficient teachers available and those affected by the shortage.

Type of curriculum: For team teaching, class size variations, teacher aide programs, and television use, very little difference in rate of adoption appeared between colleges categorizing themselves as having a transfer program and those with a terminal curriculum. Transfer colleges tended to show a higher adoption rate when reporting on language laboratory use. It would be assumed that terminal programs would not offer as much foreign language work as transfer curriculums.

Cost per A.D.A.: The "$401 to $600" colleges had the highest percentage of adoption in the case of teacher aide and language laboratory programs. The "$601 to $800" institutions had more television, and the "over $800" junior colleges had adopted team teaching and class size variations techniques at a higher rate. Cost would not appear to be strongly associated with broad experimentation.

The hypothesis of the study was substantiated for four of the five experimental programs. In each of these four programs, team teaching, class size variations, teacher aides, and language laboratories—a higher correlation was shown between nonadoption and the attitude reported by the chief administrator toward the particular technique than between nonadoption and some situational concern such as lack of funds, lack of staff, or lack of space.

In the case of team teaching, the correlation was .40, the highest situational correlation was .25. In class size, the correlation was .46, with the highest situational correlation being .16.

In the use of teacher aides, the correlation between nonadoption and the chief administrator's attitude toward the program was .46—the highest situational correlation, .26. For language laboratories, the correlation was .60, and the highest situational correlation was .17.

In the case of television, the hypothesis was not sustained. The correlation between nonadoption and the administrator's attitude was .33, while the correlation for the situational factors was .39. It would appear that nonadoption of television was the result of lack of funds rather than lack of administrative support.

The multiple regression program substantiated the findings of the factor analysis. The personal attitude of the chief administrative officer continued to be the best predictor of nonadoption for four of the five experimental programs.

Conclusions

On the basis of this study, it would appear that while some situational factors occasionally would serve as predictors, individuals or organizations, interested in promoting experimental programs that would purport to increase the efficiency of the professional teacher in the participating colleges in the study, should recognize that the personal attitude of the chief administrative officer was the most important single factor to be considered.

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[1] Ramstad, William K. "A Study of Staff Utilization Experimentation in Selected Public Junior Colleges." Unpublished doctor's dissertation, Stanford University, Stanford, 1963. 122 pages.

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